



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

am
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/611,797	06/30/2003	Bradley J. Aitchison	11429/17:2	5087

3528 7590 03/26/2004

STOEL RIVES LLP
900 SW FIFTH AVENUE
SUITE 2600
PORTLAND, OR 97204

EXAMINER

NOVACEK, CHRISTY L

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
----------	--------------

2822

DATE MAILED: 03/26/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/611,797

Applicant(s)

AITCHISON ET AL.

Examiner

Christy L. Novacek

Art Unit

2822

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 30 June 2003.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-32 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-32 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 13) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application) since a specific reference was included in the first sentence of the specification or in an Application Data Sheet. 37 CFR 1.78.
- a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121 since a specific reference was included in the first sentence of the specification or in an Application Data Sheet. 37 CFR 1.78.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) 11-19-03.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

This Office Action is in response to the communication filed June 30, 2003.

Claims Renumbered

In the application as filed, there are two claims numbered as "11.". Hence, the second of these claims, as well as claims following this claim, have been renumbered and are referred to in this office action by their renumbered number (e.g., originally listed claim 31 is now referred to as claim 32). Please correct the dependence of each of claims 12-32 so that they depend upon the correct parent claim.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

Claims 1, 2, 4, 5-7, 11, 14-19, 23-32 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Lim et al. (US 6,570,253).

Regarding claims 1, 15, 16 and 25-32, Lim discloses a first electrode (840), a dielectric structure (100) including a substantial amount of niobium oxide (Nb₂O₅) deposited over the first electrode, a current leakage inhibiting layer (110) having a thickness of "from several angstroms to dozens of angstroms", and a second electrode deposited over the dielectric structure (850)

Art Unit: 2822

(Fig. 6-8; col. 4, ln. 18-26; col. 8, ln. 1 - col. 9, ln. 51). Lim does not explicitly disclose that the dielectric structure has an overall capacitance density of greater than 25 nF/mm^2 . However, the dielectric structure is formed in the same way as Applicant's dielectric structure, wherein layers of aluminum oxide are alternated with layers of niobium oxide that have been deposited using ALD such that the layers have a thickness of anywhere from several angstroms to dozens of angstroms. Therefore, it appears that the dielectric structure of Lim would inherently possess the function of having a capacitance density of greater than 25 nF/mm^2 . See *In re Swinehart*, 439 F.2d 210, 212-13, 169 USPQ 226, 229 (CCPA 1971) "where the Patent Office has reason to believe that a functional limitation asserted to be critical for establishing novelty in the claimed subject matter may, in fact, be an inherent characteristic of the prior art, it possesses the authority to require the applicant to prove that the subject matter shown to be in the prior art does not possess the characteristics relied on"); and *In re Fitzgerald*, 619 F.2d 67, 205 USPQ 594 (CCPA 1980) (a case indicating that the burden of proof can be shifted to the applicant to show that the subject matter of the prior art does not possess the characteristic relied on whether the rejection is based on inherency under 35 U.S.C. 102 or obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103).

Regarding claims 2 and 17, Lim discloses the dielectric structure is a multilayer structure and the current leakage inhibiting layer may include a layer of aluminum oxide (Al_2O_3) that is "dozens of angstroms" thick and the niobium oxide layer is deposited overlying the layer of aluminum oxide (col. 4, ln. 18-26).

Regarding claim 4, Lim discloses the dielectric structure is a multilayer structure and the current leakage inhibiting layer may include a layer of zirconium oxide (ZrO_2) that is "dozens of angstroms" thick (col. 9, ln. 28-36).

Art Unit: 2822

Regarding claim 5, Lim discloses the dielectric structure is a multilayer structure and the current leakage inhibiting layer may include a layer of silicon oxide (SiO_2) that is “dozens of angstroms” thick (col. 9, ln. 28-36).

Regarding claims 6 and 7, Lim does not explicitly disclose that the dielectric structure has an overall capacitance density of greater than 30 or 50 nF/mm^2 , nor that the leakage current density is less than 1.0×10^{-7} amps/cm^2 . However, the dielectric structure is formed in the same way as Applicant’s dielectric structure, wherein layers of aluminum oxide are alternated with layers of niobium oxide that have been deposited using ALD such that the layers have a thickness of anywhere from several angstroms to dozens of angstroms. Therefore, it appears that the dielectric structure of Lim would inherently possess the function of having a capacitance density of greater than 30 or 50 nF/mm^2 and a leakage current density of less than 1.0×10^{-7} amps/cm^2 . See *In re Swinehart*, 439 F.2d 210, 212-13, 169 USPQ 226, 229 (CCPA 1971) “where the Patent Office has reason to believe that a functional limitation asserted to be critical for establishing novelty in the claimed subject matter may, in fact, be an inherent characteristic of the prior art, it possesses the authority to require the applicant to prove that the subject matter shown to be in the prior art does not possess the characteristics relied on ”); and *In re Fitzgerald*, 619 F.2d 67, 205 USPQ 594 (CCPA 1980) (a case indicating that the burden of proof can be shifted to the applicant to show that the subject matter of the prior art does not possess the characteristic relied on whether the rejection is based on inherency under 35 U.S.C. 102 or obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103).

Regarding claims 11 and 24, Lim discloses the dielectric structure is formed by ALD (col. 5, ln. 17-21).

Regarding claims 14 and 23, Lim discloses the dielectric structure is a multilayer structure and the current leakage inhibiting layer includes at least two separate layers of a current leakage inhibiting material and at least one layer of niobium oxide (Nb_2O_5) interposed between the layers of current leakage inhibiting material (col. 8, ln. 5-60).

Regarding claim 18, Lim discloses forming a protective cap layer (aluminum oxide) over the current leakage inhibiting material and the niobium oxide via ALD.

Regarding claim 19, Lim discloses forming a lower electrode over the substrate before depositing the current leakage inhibiting material and the niobium oxide.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claim 3 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lim et al. (US 6,570,253) in view of Won et al. (US 6,653,186).

Regarding claim 3, Lim discloses the dielectric structure is a multilayer structure and the current leakage inhibiting layer may include aluminum oxide or tantalum oxide. However, Lim does not disclose that the current leakage inhibiting layer may include hafnium oxide. Like Lim, Won discloses a capacitor which has a dielectric layer in between the upper and lower electrodes and the dielectric layer may include aluminum oxide or tantalum oxide. Won discloses that in addition to aluminum oxide or tantalum oxide, the capacitor dielectric layer (current inhibiting

Art Unit: 2822

layer) may include hafnium oxide (HfO_2) (col. 4, ln. 26-38). At the time of the invention, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to substitute hafnium oxide for the aluminum oxide or tantalum oxide of Lim because Lim teaches that a variety of different dielectric materials may be used and Won teaches that hafnium oxide may be substituted as an equivalent for aluminum oxide or tantalum oxide.

Claims 8 and 20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lim et al. (US 6,570,253) in view of Ishibashi et al. (US 6,150,690).

Regarding claims 8 and 20, Lim discloses that the niobium oxide may be deposited against the electrode but Lim does not disclose of what material electrode is made. Like Lim, Ishibashi discloses a capacitor which has a dielectric layer in between the upper and lower electrodes and the dielectric layer may include tantalum oxide (col. 4, ln. 18-30). Ishibashi discloses that an upper or lower electrode made of NbN can successfully be used with such a dielectric layer (col. 12, ln. 4-12). At the time of the invention, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to form the upper or lower electrode of Lim of NbN because Lim does not teach any particular material from which the lower electrode must be made, and Ishibashi teaches that an upper or lower electrode made of NbN can be successfully used with a dielectric layer made of tantalum oxide.

Claims 9 and 21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lim et al. (US 6,570,253) in view of Basceri et al. (US 6,586,796).

Regarding claims 9 and 21, Lim discloses that the niobium oxide may be deposited against the electrode, but Lim does not disclose of what material the lower electrode is made.

Art Unit: 2822

Like Lim, Basceri discloses a capacitor which has a dielectric layer in between the upper and lower electrodes and the dielectric layer may include aluminum oxide or niobium oxide (col. 4, ln. 18-30). Basceri discloses that a lower electrode made of WN or TaN can successfully be used with such a dielectric layer (col. 3, ln. 58-67). At the time of the invention, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to form the lower electrode of Lim of WN or TaN because Lim does not teach any particular material from which the lower electrode must be made, and Basceri teaches that a lower electrode made of WN or TaN can be successfully used with a dielectric layer made of aluminum oxide or niobium oxide.

Claims 10 and 22 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lim et al. (US 6,570,253) in view of Lin et al. (US 6,593,180).

Regarding claims 10 and 22, Lim discloses that the niobium oxide may be deposited against the electrode, but Lim does not disclose of what material the electrode is made. Like Lim, Lin discloses a capacitor which has a dielectric layer in between the upper and lower electrodes and the dielectric layer may include niobium oxide (col. 3, ln. 45-61). Lin discloses that an electrode made of platinum (Pt) can successfully be used with such a dielectric layer (col. 3, ln. 58-67). At the time of the invention, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to form the electrode of Lim of Pt because Lim does not teach any particular material from which the electrode must be made, and Lin teaches that an electrode made of Pt can be successfully used with a dielectric layer made of niobium oxide.

Claims 12 and 13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Lim et al. (US 6,570,253) in view of Gutsche et al. (US 6,693,016).

Regarding claims 12 and 13, Lim does not disclose what the first and second electrode are made of nor the way in which the electrodes are formed. Lin does disclose that the dielectric structure is formed by ALD. Like Lim, Gutsche discloses a capacitor which has a dielectric layer such as Al_2O_3 , Zr_2O_3 , TiO_2 , and Ta_2O_5 deposited by ALD in between the upper and lower electrodes (col. 6, ln. 49 – col. 8, ln. 10). Furthermore, Gutsche teaches that both upper and lower electrodes to be used in conjunction with these dielectric layers, may also be deposited by ALD (col. 6, ln. 49 – col. 8, ln. 10). At the time of the invention, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to use ALD to deposit the upper and lower electrodes of the capacitor of Lim in a single processing cycle of an ALD reaction chamber because Lim discloses using ALD to deposit the capacitor dielectric structure and using the same deposition process to form both the electrodes and the dielectric structure, as is taught by Gutsche, simplifies the fabrication of the capacitor as well as provides greater efficiency in the throughput of the semiconductor chip, as opposed to using two or three different processes in two or three separate reaction chambers and processing cycles to deposit the lower electrode, the dielectric structure and the upper electrode.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Christy L. Novacek whose telephone number is (571) 272-1839. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Thursday and alternate Fridays 7:30 - 5:00.

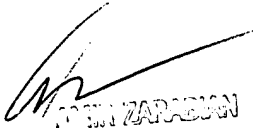
If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Amir Zarabian can be reached on (571) 272-1852. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is (703) 872-9306.

Art Unit: 2822

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

CLN

March 10, 2004


PETER ZARGIAN
SENIOR PATENT EXAMINER
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 2800